



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

For Release APRIL 24, 1959

SEATON ISSUES REGULATIONS CLOSING BRISTOL BAY, ALASKA TO COMMERCIAL RED SALMON FISHING

Regulations formally closing the Bristol Bay, Alaska, commercial red salmon fishery were signed today by Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton.

Four great river systems of Alaska, each having a traditional major salmon run, flow into Bristol Bay. Salmon from Bristol Bay migrate to the high seas of the North Pacific Ocean.

Under a convention signed at Tokyo on May 9, 1952, there was established a Provisional Abstention Line at 175° west longitude, east of which the Japanese agreed not to fish. Scientific evidence available to the United States since 1952 has revealed that Bristol Bay salmon migrate west of the Abstention Line. And Japanese high seas fishing operations have fished extensively in some years in the area of heavy intermingling of Asian and Bristol Bay salmon between 170° east longitude and the Abstention Line at 175° west longitude.

Because of expected small salmon runs in Bristol Bay this year, which could not withstand even a limited domestic fishery on the scale of 1958, in addition to the expected Japanese operations west of the Abstention Line, Secretary Seaton announced on March 13 that the Department was contemplating action to close Bristol Bay.

The Department of State and the Department of the Interior have worked closely together in conferring with representatives of the Japanese government in an attempt to work out a solution to the high seas problem. However, these discussions have not resulted in an arrangement which we consider would permit U. S. fishermen to carry on commercial fishing operations in Bristol Bay.

Secretary Seaton stated that: "Under the circumstances, and upon the basis of advice received from our Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, it is imperative that we prescribe a general closure on red salmon fishing during the coming season to allow escapement of brood stock to the spawning grounds. There is no alternative, This is the only way available to insure that there will be Bristol Bay red salmon runs in the future."

The regulations signed today permit a subsistence-type fishery that will at least partially alleviate the hardship to the resident population of Bristol Bay, where salmon fishing is virtually the sole means of livelihood.

In the Nushagak District, which normally accounts for about 12 percent of the Bristol Bay salmon pack, the run is expected to be relatively stronger than in other sections of the area. Here a very limited subsistence-type red salmon fishery is provided by the new regulations.

The length of the weekly fishing period will be governed by the amount of fishing gear registered for use in the Nushagak District. In the Bristol Bay area generally, commercial fishing for species other than red salmon and personal use salmon fishing by means of set nets are permitted.

Secretary Seaton indicated that further changes in the Bristol Bay regulations may be necessary, dependent upon the extent of the Japanese high seas fishery in the North Pacific and upon field observations by the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, during the fishing season.

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